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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents tutoring strategies for use in the Read-Write-Now! Partners Tutoring Program, which assists school-age children, grades 1-6, in reading and writing. The booklet discusses general strategies, guidelines for effective tutoring, what to do during tutoring sessions, paired reading (including the basics and some "finer points"), vocabulary development, word attack strategies, comprehension, and writing assignments. A sample certificate of appreciation for tutors and a tutor agreement and log are attached. (RS)

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READ WRITE NOW!

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THE READ WRITE NOW! PARTNERS TUTORING PROGRAM

A joint project of
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
and the United States Department of Education

A training guide compiled by Richard L. Venezky
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THE READ WRITE NOW! PARTNERS TUTORING PROGRAM

The READ WRITE NOW! Partners Tutoring Program is a set of activities for assisting school-age children, grades 1-6, in reading and writing. Although the focus of the activities is on reading, the improvement of writing is an equally important goal. All activities are planned for one-on-one tutoring with a high school student or adult acting as the tutor. According to the situation, tutoring could take place during school time or outside of school, such as during the afternoon or evening or on a weekend or holiday. The child being tutored (the student) will generally be located through arrangements with a school district or with an individual school. Arrangements might also be made through youth organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs and through libraries. Both the tutor and the student should commit themselves to an initial 24 tutoring sessions, distributed as evenly as possible over 12 weeks. In general, this means two tutoring sessions of 35 minutes each per week .

A tutoring session is built around materials that the student wants to read or needs to read for specific school assignments. It is essential that the student has some motivation to read the materials. The quality of the reading material is less important.

Within a session, the student may read aloud with the tutor, read aloud alone, work on vocabulary, word attack, or comprehension strategies, and engage in writing. The tutor does not need to be an expert in reading and writing; however, greater gains can be achieved by using tutoring strategies such as those described in this guide.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

Tutoring sessions should be fast-paced with little time spent on matters not related to reading and writing. When the student is reading or working on printed materials, these materials should be arranged comfortably in front of the student and not in a neutral position between the student and the tutor. If necessary, obtain duplicate copies of materials to be read. Begin sessions with a quick review of the work done in the last session; then move on to new activities. Use positive reinforcement frequently, but don't mislead the student on the quality of his or her performance. Try instead to include activities where the student can succeed.

Always start an activity at a level where the student can work with some success. Then provide whatever support is needed to move to the next level of difficulty. Repeat tasks that the student needs support for as often as needed, with relaxation of support with each repetition. This scaffolding technique should be used whenever possible.

Help the student keep a record of new vocabulary words that are encountered in reading. These should be recorded on 5" x 8" index cards with the word printed on one side and, if desired by the student, a brief definition on the other. Attach a rubber band around the stack to keep the cards together and place a title card on the top saying "Vocabulary" or "New Words" or something equivalent. Encourage the student to review these cards at home or in school.

Also keep a folder of the student's writing and occasionally review the file with the student, providing brief critiques of each paper. In addition, let the student tell you his or her opinion of the quality of each piece.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE TUTORING

1. **Create a supportive, safe situation for tutoring.**
"Safe" means "not judgmental" and "not punishing." The student should learn quickly that making mistakes is all right, that no grades are given, and that you are there to help.

2. **Be honest in responding.**
If the student is correct, say so, but don't exaggerate accomplishments. And if the student is incorrect, say so supportingly: "No, that's not right, but it's a good try." or (if close to the target) "Not quite, but you're on the right track." In speaking with a student, do not correct incorrect grammar or usage. Instead, model correct speech at all times.

3. **Don't over-explain.**
Say the minimum amount needed to assist the student. Keep the focus of each session on the student's readings and explanations, not yours.

4. **Help learners to think independently.**
Give them strategies for figuring things out on their own. Encourage self-help. Avoid having them become dependent upon you for pronouncing unknown words and explaining difficult phrases and sentences. Rather than giving answers to general questions students ask, consider responding with "How do you think we could find an answer to this?" or "Whom could we ask for an answer?"

5. **Be relaxed and don't worry about making mistakes.**
All tutors occasionally will do something wrong. And when you don't know the answer to a question, say so.

WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

Step 1

Sign up your reading partner

The first step in tutoring is to locate a student and to agree with the student and his parents on the initial 24 sessions. Information relevant to these sessions should be entered on a tutoring agreement (see example attached) with a copy given to the child, parent, or teacher. After each session, information should be entered on this form (time, date, general activities, progress, new needs).

At the end of the initial 24 sessions, the student receives a certificate of participation in READ WRITE NOW! plus an option to sign up for an additional 24 sessions. During this last session the student's accomplishments should be reviewed and the student praised for the progress made. A copy of the tutoring agreement, with session information entered, should be given to the parent or teacher. If possible, an oral discussion should be held with the parent or teacher to report on progress, identify problems, and arrange for continued tutoring if it is mutually desired.

Step 2

Ask the student to bring reading materials to each session

In general, the student should bring reading materials to each session. The tutor should always have available several age-appropriate stories and other types of reading texts for times when the child may forget to bring materials. If convenient and mutually agreeable, the child could be taken to the library to obtain a library card if he or she does not already have one.

Step 3

Create a tutoring schedule

Develop with the child and the teacher or parent a schedule for tutoring sessions. If possible, schedule the sessions at the same time and day of the week for all 12 weeks. Select a place to meet that is convenient for the child.

Step 4

Plan a tutoring session

A typical 35-minute session might be scheduled as follows:

Quick review of last session (3 minutes)
Rereading of a story (5 minutes)
Paired Reading of a new story (10 minutes)
Vocabulary and comprehension exercises (5 minutes)
Writing activity plus feedback (12 minutes)

Step 5

Tutor

In the following sections strategies are given for each of the tutoring activities. Remember, however, the keys to effective tutoring are given above.

Step 6

Plan the next session

Take time at the end of the session to plan the next session with the student. Review the time and place for the next meeting and talk a little about what the student wants to read. Then be sure to update your log on the session that just ended. If problems occurred that you were not sure how to handle, note them on a separate sheet of paper and seek assistance from an advisor, teacher, or other tutor as soon as possible.

PAIRED READING: THE BASICS[1]

Paired Reading is an easy-to-use approach to tutoring that allows variable amounts of support for the student reader. It is built around student control of reading, with the tutor reading in unison with the student or remaining quiet as the student reads, all at the command of the student. The student chooses what to read—book, comic, advertisement, magazine article or any other text. For difficult materials you will do more duet reading and for easy materials the student will do more solo reading. However, over time you should encourage the student to select materials that are challenging but not frustrating. Here's how Paired Reading works:

1. Explain to the student that sometimes the two of you will read aloud in unison (duet reading) and sometimes he or she will read aloud alone (solo reading). You will always start in unison but the student should always try to read solo as soon as he or she feels ready.

2. Select two simple signals that the student will give: one for initiating solo reading and one for initiating duet reading. These signals can be pointing to self (for solo reading) and pointing to the tutor (for duet reading), taps on the shoulder or on the table, or anything else that is simple and unambiguous.

[1]Paired Reading is a project of the Northern Alberta Reading Specialists' Council. The information that follows on Paired Reading is based on *Paired Reading: Positive Reading Practice*, written by Anne Brailsford in consultation with Margaret Brimacombe, Jan Coles, Ruth Hayden, Maureen Sanders, and Berenice Taylor. (Filmwest Associates Distribution Ltd., 2399 Hayman Road, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada V1Z 1Z7)

3. Paired Reading begins in duet when the student signals the reading partner to begin reading (the duet signal). Adjust your reading speed so that the two of you are reading in unison.

4. When the student wants to shift to solo reading, he or she gives the solo signal. When this happens, you should stop reading, smile, and give some brief, positive praise to the student (nod your head in approval, or whisper "good").

5. Continue the session for the allotted time, allowing the student to go back and forth between solo and duet reading. Give lots of positive feedback, especially for solo reading. Praise the student at the end of Paired Reading also.

This is all there is to the basic scheme. Of course, the student may shift back and forth from duet reading to solo reading several times in a session. This is fine. And you may find that you have too much to remember in the first tutoring sessions. Don't worry! In a short time the Paired Reading procedure will become automatic and you will be able to focus on the types of errors the student is making and on how well meaning is being created from the text.

PAIRED READING: SOME FINER POINTS

Encouraging challenging materials

It is important that the student choose the materials to be read in the Paired Reading sessions. You should encourage the student, however, to bring a few things to read, including fun things as well as more serious school books or materials. This will allow you to switch readings during a session when the student's initial choice is far too easy or too hard to be useful for tutoring. Some students will choose extremely easy materials to read for the first session or two, mostly out of uncertainty over being tutored. As the student gains confidence in the tutor, he or she will usually be willing to move on to more challenging reading. Sometimes, however, the desire to read solo all the time leads a student to persist with easy materials. If this happens, you might try gentle persuasion, explaining that Paired Reading will help only if harder materials are attempted and if the two of you occasionally read in duet. If this fails, then offer a book, comic, or article that you select, telling the student that you know that the two of you will be able to handle it together.

The problem of students selecting materials that are far too difficult occurs less often and usually means that more duet reading is done. If, however, the chosen reading is so far above the student's current reading level that every third or fourth word (or more) is missed, switch to something that is easier to read. Learning disabled students especially may attempt materials above their ability levels because of their intellectual curiosity. In such cases, use your own judgment whether to continue supporting the student's faltering reading or to shift to easier reading materials.

Encouraging solo reading

In general, students will do more solo reading with easy materials than with difficult ones. However, do not push the student too hard to go solo and don't show any anxiety over this. Some students are low risk takers and many poorer readers have low confidence in their academic abilities. Paired Reading offers such students a safety net. Be patient while they build up their confidence levels. Remind the student at the beginning of each session of the signal for going solo and suggest that he or she try it. When the first solo reading is signaled, give immediate praise and continue to praise the reading as it continues in solo mode. At the beginning of the next session, remind the student of how well he or she did reading solo in the previous session.

If a student seems particularly reluctant to read solo, try first to choose a particularly easy reading selection and see if this leads to solo reading. If not, try echo reading. In this scheme, you read a sentence with full expression, and then the student repeats the sentence, attempting to give the same expression. After this becomes comfortable for the student, ask him or her to repeat the sentence after you and then to read the next sentence or two. After doing this a few times, move back to duet reading with the expectation that the student will signal soon for solo reading.

Pronunciation errors

If the student reads a word incorrectly in duet reading, you should read the word correctly; then the student should repeat the word while looking at it. You might want to point your finger below a word before you correct a student's pronunciation of it. Once the student has repeated the word, continue with duet reading.

If a student mispronounces a word in solo reading, point to the word and give the correct pronunciation. Ask the student to repeat the pronunciation, rereading the phrase or sentence in which it occurs. Then revert to duet reading until the student signals to switch to solo reading. If a student struggles with a difficult word, allow about four seconds for a correct response and then pronounce the word yourself (while pointing to it). Then continue as just stated with the student repeating the word and the phrase or sentence in which it occurs before continuing with duet reading. Note words that are mispronounced so you can return to them with the vocabulary practice suggestions given below.

Avoiding the "trailing" reader

A few students will always try to read just after the tutor reads in duet reading. This is usually a failure prevention strategy, especially for students with low estimations of their own abilities. If this happens, try to encourage easy materials for reading so that you and the student can build up a reading rhythm. Remind the student that switching materials during a session is OK. Don't move on to solo reading until the two of you are reading in unison.

Student comments

If the student comments on what is read or asks questions, provide positive feedback or answers, but don't allow conversation to dominate the session until reading aloud has concluded. In general, be friendly and supportive, but try to keep the student's focus on oral reading. After reading is concluded, invite comments and questions on the reading selection.

Be positive

It is important to be positive about the student's choice of reading materials and the student's reading efforts. Change in reading ability won't occur overnight, so don't worry that a student continues to make errors or to struggle with words. And remember to praise any attempt to go solo.

A few more things to think about

With less skilled readers, avoid correcting smaller violations of proper oral reading. If some punctuation is ignored or if inappropriate expression is used, don't correct these if pronunciation errors are frequent. Wait until the two of you are working well together and word errors are reduced. Then you can model correct expression and give proper attention to punctuation.

Avoid as much as possible changing tutors. Make sure your schedule allows you to complete the entire set of tutoring sessions before you agree to take on a student. Paired Reading can be successful with a new tutor but younger students in particular need the comfort that comes from a stable tutoring situation.

VOCABULARY

After rereading a text and after Paired Reading, return to all vocabulary words that were not read correctly on the first try. Help the student sound out each word (see instructions below under Word Attack). If a meaning is still not known after a word is sounded out, help the student use context either to find the meaning or to determine some features of the word. For example, in the sentence "That was the largest tapir I had ever seen in captivity," the meaning of tapir may not be clear, but you can guess that it is an animal that could be found in a zoo. Once a word is identified, ask the student for related words and for synonyms (words that have roughly the same meaning) and for antonyms (opposites), if any exist. Encourage the student to write each new word on a 3" X 5" card; if desired, the meaning can be written on the back.

Once a week review all of the word cards with the student. For each word, ask first for recall of the context in which the word occurred. Then ask for related words. Finally, for those words that don't appear to be known, ask for a meaning. If the student needs help, try first to use the word in a sentence that makes the meaning obvious. Then give a brief meaning. If the student's listening and speaking vocabularies are weak, spend a few minutes in each session on activities such as the following:

1. Make a list of five or six words that describe different sizes, dimensions, speed of movement, or any other property that can vary along a single dimension. Write the words randomly in a list. Then ask the student to rewrite the words in a new list, ordering them from the least, slowest, or smallest to the most, fastest, or largest, for example. Words that are close synonyms should be written on the same line. Help the student when needed. Some initial lists might include: (a) tiny, small, little, large, gigantic, enormous, average; (b) creeping, slow, moderate, swift, fast, speedy; (c) inch, foot, yard, kilometer, mile, light-year; or (d) newborn, infant, child, youth, teenager, adult.

2. Select three or four verbs with similar meanings and help the student decide how the words differ. Encourage students to consider how they would use each word and what other words it occurs with in sentences. Some initial groups to use include these (you can add your own choices to these and also create your own lists):

- **shout, yell, scream**
- **jump, hop, skip, leap**
- **morning, dawn, sunrise**
- **super, great, wonderful, terrific**
- **build, repair, patch, fix**

3. Select a topic from one of the readings or from the student's interests (e.g., clothing, sports) and ask for all words the student can recall that belong to the topic. Write the words as a list. Prompt for terms not given along with their meanings. Help the student see how the words within the topic are related to each other.

WORD ATTACK

For students who have difficulty sounding out words, model how you would sound out a word you don't immediately recognize in print. Say the word parts slowly and then all together. Demonstrate how you would try several different pronunciations, particularly of vowels, in attempting to produce a word that **sounds** familiar. For longer words, point out common prefixes and endings, and then pronounce the words syllable by syllable. If more help is needed, try one or more of these activities.

1. Ask the student to pronounce the following pairs of words, each of which contrasts a short and a long pronunciation for the same vowel spelling. Point out how the final "e" signals the long pronunciation.

mat—mate
met—mete (pronounced like "meat")
sit—site
rob—robe
tub—tube

If this is difficult, assist the student with the pairs and then proceed to activities 2 and 3.

For students who have mastered these pairs, continue with:

ladder—lady
petty—Peter
dinner—diner
comma—coma
supper—super

Point out that the doubled consonant almost always signals a short vowel sound.

2. Ask the student to remove the initial consonants one at a time and test whether a real word results. Some words to start with, and the words derived from them, are shown below.

black: back, lack
train: rain
crash: cash, rash, ash
slack: sack, lack
crow: cow (notice new pronunciation of "ow"), row
brace: race, ace (notice that "bace" sounds like a real word)
scream: seam, cream, ream

3. Ask the student to change the middle vowel letter in each word below and decide which new spellings are real words. Make a matrix as shown below.

a	e	i	o	u
tap	red	trip	jot	tub
sat	met			

COMPREHENSION

On the first reading of a story or expository article, ask for personal reactions: "What did you enjoy the most?", "What did you enjoy least?", "How did this story/article make you feel?", "Have you had an experience like this or ever read or heard anything like it?" Follow up each student response with a further question that draws on the response and requires the student to reflect on his or her answer. Some follow-up questions might be as simple as "Why didn't you like ..." or "Can you think of anything else that made you feel that way?"

Then ask a few questions that require the student to extend beyond what was directly stated: "Why do you think so-and-so didn't want to do ...?", "What do you think would happen if ...", "What might have helped solve the problem quicker?", etc. If necessary, ask the student to reread a sentence or paragraph that is relevant to a question you asked. As with the initial questions, follow each answer with a further question that requires reflection on the answer given. Keep building on the student responses to generate new questions as long as the student continues to reflect on his or her statements. Then switch to a new topic.

If the student shows misunderstandings about the story or article, select one or more paragraphs for rereading. Ask the student to read them one at a time and to summarize each after it is read. Look for key words or phrases that are misinterpreted. Help the student figure out the correct meanings. Then use the writing activities to reinforce comprehension further.

WRITING

End each session with a brief writing assignment built around what was read or around some writing task the student needs to complete. This might be as simple as a sentence or two about one of the readings or a longer task, such as a letter to a character in a story offering advice on how to solve a problem, or a mini instruction guide for doing something that was described in an article, or a rewriting of part of a story. Stress planning the composition, including drafting an outline (for longer assignments), and then writing a first draft without stopping to check spellings. Provide feedback first on overall structure, expression, and completeness. Then discuss the smaller parts: sentence structure, noun-verb agreement, proper use of articles and verbs, etc. Help with spelling or just circle words that are misspelled and ask the student to check them in a dictionary.

In all writing projects, stress overall structure and expression. Suggest descriptive adjectives and lively verbs that give freshness and punch. Also encourage rewriting with specific aims: changing the order of ideas, adding more detail, etc.

BUT REMEMBER...

The tutoring sessions should be comfortable for both you and the student you are tutoring. Don't worry if you can't fit everything you plan into a session or if you don't always give the best advice. Like the student, you too will learn in time to do it well. Relax, enjoy, and by your enthusiasm and good nature you will motivate the student to become a better reader and writer.

TUTORING AGREEMENT AND LOG

Tutor name _____ Phone _____

agrees to tutor

Student name _____ Phone _____

Enter below the dates and times you have agreed on for tutoring.
After each session the tutor should add notes on the session outcomes.

Week	Date	Time	Notes
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

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AMERICAN INITIATIVE ON READING AND WRITING

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Presented to

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